

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS**

The following is a complete listing of the claims, which replace all previous versions of the claims.

1. (currently amended) A port configuration system for a computing device, comprising:
  - a plurality of ports configured for communication between a plurality of electronic devices comprising the computing device and at least one peripheral device;
  - a plurality of connectors disposed adjacent the plurality of ports, wherein at least two ports of the plurality of ports share a common connector of the plurality of connectors, wherein the common connector is configured for mutually exclusive use by one port of the at least two ports for coupling the one port to a desired electronic device.
2. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the at least two ports are externally disposed on the computing device.
3. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the at least two ports are disposed on a portable computing device.
4. (original) The system of claim 3, wherein the portable computing device comprises a laptop computer.
5. (original) The system of claim 3, wherein the portable computing device comprises a palmtop computer.
6. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the at least two ports are disposed on the peripheral device.

7. (original) The system of claim 6, wherein the peripheral device comprises a portable memory device.

8. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein at least one of the plurality of ports comprises a plurality of parallel pins.

9. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of ports comprise a serial port.

10. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of ports comprise a parallel port.

11. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of ports comprise a midi/game port.

12. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of ports comprise a monitor port.

13. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of ports comprise a docking port.

14. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein each of the at least two ports has two of the connectors, one of which is the common connector.

15. (cancelled)

16. (original) The system of claim 1, wherein the plurality of connectors comprise threaded receptacles configured to receive screw members adjacent a communication cable.

17. (currently amended) A space reduction system for a plurality of communication ports for a portable computing device, comprising:

a communication panel for the portable computing device;

a plurality of ports disposed on the communication panel, wherein at least two ports of the plurality of ports are disposed adjacent one another; and

a plurality of connectors disposed on the communication panel adjacent the plurality of ports, wherein the at least two ports share a common connector of the plurality of connectors and wherein the at least two ports comprise first and second port types configured for mutually exclusive communication with an external device via a communication connector adapted to one of the first and second port types.

18. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein the communication panel is disposed on an exterior side of the portable computing device.

19. (original) The system of claim 18, wherein the portable computing device comprises a laptop computer.

20. (original) The system of claim 18, wherein the portable computing device comprises a notebook computer.

21. (original) The system of claim 18, wherein the portable computing device comprises a handheld computing device.

22. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein at least one of the plurality of ports comprises a plurality of parallel conductors configured for coupling with a communication cable via a plug at an end of the communication cable.

23. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein at least one of the plurality of ports comprises a serial port.

24. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein at least one of the plurality of ports comprises a parallel port.

25. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein at least one of the plurality of ports comprises a video port.

26. (cancelled)

27. (original) The system of claim 17, wherein each of the at least two ports has two of the connectors, one of which is the common connector.

28. (currently amended) A system for conserving space, comprising:  
a portable computing device having[[:]] :

a first communication port externally disposed on the portable computing device;

a second communication port externally disposed on the portable computing device adjacent to the first communication port, wherein the first and second communication ports comprise first and second port types configured for mutually exclusive communication with an external device via a communication connector adapted to one of the first and second port types; and

a common connector disposed on the portable computing device between the first and second communication ports.

29. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein the portable computing device comprises one of a laptop computer, a notebook computer, and a subnotebook computer.

30. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein the portable computing device comprises a handheld computing device.

31. (cancelled)

32. (original) The system of claim 29, wherein the first and second port types comprise two different port types from of plurality of port types comprising a serial port, a parallel port, a video port, a midi/game port, and a docking port.

33. (original) The system of claim 28, wherein each of the first and second ports has two adjacent connectors disposed on the portable computing device, one of the two adjacent connectors being the common connector.

34. (currently amended) A method of configuring ports for communication between electronic devices, comprising:

disposing a plurality of communication ports on a first electronic device;  
locating a plurality of connectors on the first electronic device adjacent the plurality of communication ports;  
positioning the plurality of communication ports adjacent one another; and  
deploying a single connector of the plurality of connectors between the plurality of communication ports for sharing among the plurality of communication ports, wherein the single connector is configured for mutually exclusive use by one of the plurality of communication ports.

35. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein disposing comprises disposing the plurality of communication ports on a stationary computing apparatus.

36. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein disposing the first electronic device comprises disposing the plurality of communication ports on a portable computing apparatus.

37. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein disposing the plurality of communication ports comprises disposing at least one port having a plurality of parallel conductor pins on the first electronic device.

38. (original) The method of claim 34, comprising forming threaded receptacles in at least one of the plurality of connectors for mating with screw members of a communication linkage.

39. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein positioning the single connector comprises eliminating a number of connectors, the number being equal to one less than the plurality of communication ports.

40. (original) The method of claim 34, wherein positioning the single connector comprises reducing spacing between the plurality of communication ports.

41. (original) The method of claim 40, wherein reducing spacing between the plurality of communication ports comprises reducing a dimension of the computing device.

42. (original) The method of claim 40, wherein reducing spacing between the plurality of communication ports comprises reducing a dimension of a circuit board for the computing device.

43. (currently amended) A method of minimizing space requirements for a plurality of input/output ports for a portable computing device, comprising:

disposing first and second ports on the portable computing device, wherein the first and second ports have connector members for coupling with an input/output cable;

positioning the first and second ports adjacent one another; and

sharing one member of the connector members between the first and second ports, wherein the one member is configured for mutually exclusive use by either the first port or the second port.

44. (original) The method of claim 43, wherein disposing comprises disposing the first and second ports on a handheld computer.

45. (original) The method of claim 43, wherein disposing comprises disposing the first and second ports on a laptop computer.

46. (original) The system of claim 43, wherein disposing the first and second ports comprises disposing a serial port on the portable computing device.

47. (original) The system of claim 43, wherein disposing the first and second ports comprises disposing a parallel port on the portable computing device.

48. (original) The method of claim 43, wherein sharing comprises eliminating one of the connector members.

49. (original) The method of claim 43, wherein sharing comprises reducing spacing between the first and second ports.

50. (original) The method of claim 49, wherein reducing spacing between the first and second ports comprises reducing a dimension of the first electronic device.